



Facts

What they are

A member of the dog family.

Height, length, weight, lifespan, number of offspring

Height: 60cm at the shoulders

Length: 1-1.3m (including the tail)

Weight: 9-23kg

Lifespan: 6-8 years

Offspring: 4 to 7 pups in each litter

Where they live

They live in North and Central America. They are most common on the Great Plains of North America.

Food chain

The coyote are near the top of the food chain. When they hunt in packs, they can kill much larger animals, such as bison and deer. However, hares and rabbits are their most-common food. They are omnivores (plant and meat-eaters), and will eat wild berries and fruit if prey is hard to find. The coyote competes for food with the lynx, bobcat and fox. Larger animals such as wolves and cougars prey on coyotes.

Threats

Coyotes are very common. The main threat to the coyote is from humans. People hunt coyotes for their fur. Coyotes are also killed by farmers and ranchers, who think coyotes are pests because they prey on livestock such as sheep and chickens, and eat crops such as melons. Many coyotes are also hit by cars, especially near cities.

In the wild, diseases such as mange, rabies and distemper are the major causes of death. Mange causes the coyotes to lose their fur, so that they die from the cold in the winter. In cities, many of these diseases are also spread to coyotes by domestic dogs.

Although hunting and poisoning coyotes is still common, they can also live easily in cities and so the coyote is not yet in danger of extinction. But if there were fewer coyotes, then there would be too many rabbits and hares, who would eat the grasses that keep soil from washing away. So, fewer coyotes could upset the food chain, and mean a lot more deserts and fewer plants.